

October 3, 1984

Now and then, over the past twenty-five years, I have attended meetings of this Council. Since the administrative portion of Newark's government is just about incommunicado, the Council meetings are the only real contact the citizen has with his government and the only avenue of information as to what is going on.

It is for this reason that, over the years, I have been disappointed with one aspect of the meetings of the City Council.

We listen to the reading of an ordinance by the City Clerk, and, at times, to discussions of the ordinance by members of the Council. Then comes "Roll Call". Responses by most Council members, sometimes all, are inaudible. Lip reading doesn't help. One wonders how the President determines whether or not the ordinance is approved or rejected.

I submit that the citizens in attendance are entitled to know, not only that an ordinance has been approved or disapproved, but how each Council member voted. If he does not get this clear, audible "yes" or "no", he may infer that the whole business is cut and dried before-hand and that he is seeing a pro forma replay designed to satisfy some legal requirement. I do not believe this is the case, but the inference is understandable. It can also be inferred that members do not wish to reveal their preferences in the public forum.

I can understand that it is quite a chore to respond to fifty or a hundred roll calls in the manner suggested, but I believe it is an obligation of the job for which you are being paid, and for which you have just given yourselves increased compensation.

I hope you will consider this suggestion in the spirit in which it is offered, and that is to enhance the image of this Council in the views of the citizens who attend its meetings.

D. J. H.
D. J. Henderson